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ABSTRACT

To improve its response time on interlibrary loan requests within the Metropolitan Cooperative Library System (MCLS), the Glendale Public Library is considering the consolidation of its response process within the Circulation Department (CD). At present this response is a joint effort between the CD, the Readers' Assistance Section, and the Reference Section. Under the suggested changes, the MCLS clerk would perform the entire process. The process seldom requires professional librarian skills, and its assignment to one person would considerably speed it up. It would also remove a clerical duty from the professional staff. It has been estimated that from one to four labor hours per day are being expended for that portion of the effort outside the CD. In order to accomplish this work flow change, additional time would have to be made available within the CD. Due to constant interruptions, the efficiency of the librarians involved is not high, and therefore it is felt that fewer total hours would be required under the proposed changes. (Author/SL)

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IMPROVED INTERNAL WORK FLOW

FOR PROCESSING

METROPOLITAN COOPERATIVE LIBRARY SYSTEM

INTER-LIBRARY LOAN REQUESTS

AT THE

GLENDALE PUBLIC LIBRARY

Prepared
for the
Chief Librarian
Library Division
City of Glendale

By
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City Manager's Staff

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As a member of the Metropolitan Cooperative Library System (MCLS), the Glendale Public Library participates in the response to requests for library material from other member libraries via teletype. At present this response is a joint effort between the Circulation Unit, the Readers' Assistance Section, and the Reference Section. Glendale's response time to requests is among the slowest in the MCLS group. It is suggested that some efficiencies in response time and in total labor could be achieved by consolidating the response effort to within the Circulation Unit alone.

The current process flow is as follows: an inquiry is received on the teletype and is removed by the Circulation Unit MCLS Clerk. The MCLS Clerk delivers the teletype message paper strip to the Readers' Assistance Section. When time is available, one of the librarians on duty in the Readers' Assistance Section will go to the card catalog file and check all fiction entries on the teletype strip to determine if they are in the Glendale collection and if the entry is correct as to author etc. The fiction entries are so marked and then the teletype strip is delivered to the Reference Section where, when the time is available, the entire process is repeated for non-fiction items. Then again when time is available, the teletype strip is given to a Page to check on the shelf or in storage for the items which are supposed to be in Glendale's collection. Items found are pulled and the teletype list is marked to indicate found and missing items as "sending" or "in circulation." The list is then returned along with any located material to the MCLS Clerk who transmits the appropriate reply on the teletype to the requesting library and prepares the material for inter-library pickup.

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This multiple-person five-step handling of the request has caused Glendale to be very slow in responding in comparison to some libraries, and occasionally repeat requests are received due to the assumption that Glendale didn't get a clear transmission of the first request. A delay of 24 hours is considered very bad response. The response time of the best libraries is on the order of one or two hours. Glendale has been criticized in the MCLS meetings for their slow response time, but as it is currently handled, most of the processing time is completely out of the control of the MCLS Clerk. The effort performed within the Circulation Unit was in fact found to be quite efficient.

It is suggested that the Glendale response time could be significantly improved by changing the process flow so that the MCLS Clerk performs the entire operation. The process seldom requires professional librarian skills, and it could be a simple matter for the MCLS Clerk to ask a few pertinent questions if it was necessary. The proposed flow would consolidate all of the operation within the control of the person responsible for it and would considerably speed up the process. It is believed that the MCLS Clerk is quite capable of determining if the item is fiction or non-fiction, if the item is apt to be on the "new" books shelf or is in storage etc.

In addition it would remove a clerical duty from the professional staff. It has been estimated that from one to four labor hours per day are being expended for that portion of the effort outside the Circulation Unit.

In order to accomplish this work flow change, additional time would have to be made available within the Circulation Unit. Due to constant interruptions, the efficiency of the librarians checking the list is not

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high and therefore it is believed that fewer total hours would be required if the entire operation were consolidated in the Circulation Unit.